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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Bulgaria

SUBJECT Soviet Influence on Bulgarian National Elections

DATE ACQUIRED

DATE DISTR 25 Jan 1954

NO. OF PAGES 3

NO. OF ENCLS.

SUPP. TO  
REPORT NO.

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1. "On 22 Dec 53 Bulgaria had its national elections, and as always in Cominform countries the Communist Party received 99.8 per cent votes.
2. "These elections were originally planned for July, were postponed till September, and finally held in December [1953]. No official reason was given for this postponement. One could feel in Sofia that something intriguing was brewing.
3. "Something was wrong somewhere in the Bulgaria-Moscow link, which during the past nine years [since 1944] has bonded the two in a strong ideological and economic association. And it had been clear that much as Sofia's governmental leaders had tried it, the picture as Moscow wished for was just not emerging.
4. "And Sofia, with its 19th Century appearance and noisy rambling electric street cars, is never unrepresented in the Cominform politics by the Kremlin. Bulgaria is the last Communist outpost in the Free Balkans. Sofia commands a strategic position over the routes of Belgrade, Istanbul, Macedonia, the Danube, and Athens. A military expert placed Bulgaria's artillery power as three times that of Turkey.
5. "Herein Moscow very meticulously gauges the pressure point of the Bulgarians. The Kremlin experiment with Belgrade was disastrous, to say the least.

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- 231
6. "And so beneath the facade of Communist strength in the Bulgarian December 1953 elections, there is a story--more different from the usual Communist elections.
  7. "I recall the chubby, thick-haired Bulgarian Prime Minister, Volko Chervenkov, echo the sentiments of the late spiritual father of the Cominform, Dimitrov, and say, 'Moscow is like sun and air to us'.
  8. "A foreman at the Lenin Metallurgical Plant, which opened in spring 1953, has the country's [Bulgaria] only blast furnace and suffices 20 per cent of domestic needs, commented with enthusiasm: 'See what Moscow has done for us.'
  9. "Surprisingly objective in approach, a journalist very meticulously dug out the misstatements of official economists. Government figures say industrial production has been fulfilled 100.9 per cent. He suggested that it was 40 per cent less than that stipulated in the Five Year Plan. He explained by stating: 'People's enthusiasm for Marxism is on the decline. The early years of fervor are gone. More than half of the one million peasants have successfully resisted collectivization.'
  10. "On being asked about Cominformism (which is being replaced by emphasis on nationalism), a Macedonian peasant looked intently, shrugged his shoulders, and continued working on a Soviet imported tractor. He meant neither yes nor no. He is too far removed from questions of higher politics. The Bulgarians as such are too far removed from Sofia.
  11. "And as another peasant said: 'In Sofia the bosses think of Marxism and the Cominform; here we think of the tractors and the next meal. We don't normally think beyond this.'
  12. "Even the rural political bosses don't discuss ideological questions. They merely discuss wheat crops and virtues of collectivization.
  13. "In industry the story is slightly different. The proletariat class is politically important, numerically small (150 thousand). It is for them that parks, rest homes, and welfare centers are built. The peasants don't even have electricity. Of the four thousand villages hardly 1200 have electricity--and these are collectivized farms.
  14. "And one reason that elections were held in winter was--during summer it is possible for the peasant to cast a vote; during snowy winter months he doesn't have the facilities to leave even his home much less take interest in politics. Even the climatic conditions are exploited by the Communists.
  15. "To a populace, 30 per cent of which is illiterate, Cominform policies are a novelty. Chances are that a peasant, or a worker, or a city dweller couldn't even name the cabinet ministers. These people prefer to confine themselves to their lathes, tractors, and horse carriages (they have four thousand tractors, which is a tractor a village). The womenfolk like 'hair ballot performances,' dress picturesquely in the rural areas, obligingly pose for East European tourist photographers, and never miss a chance to invade the rest homes. A few stiff-necked urbanites still have a 'bourgeois outlook.' A hotel maid resented state treatment: 'This is charity. I will call for my private doctor if my flu gets worse.'
  16. "Everything goes on in a silent, orderly, businesslike way. Then Moscow realized with horror that Bulgaria had developed a tendency to react. The Bulgarians normally didn't react (and remained under serfdom for centuries). By the end of 1952, and for the first time since Bulgaria 'went' Communist in September 1944, they had begun to show symptoms of reaction.
  17. "By spring 1953 Sofia and Moscow were perturbed. Soviet officials were insulted in Bulgaria; newspapers became critical of Soviet advisers and commented on

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

their strained relations with local workers. Bulgarian leaders complained that Sofia had lost the importance in the Cominform, the importance when Dimitrov bossed the Cominform.

18. "Moscow countrereacted quickly. Sofia was 'allowed' to act 'independently' and seek friendship with the Free Balkans. At the Lenin plant the Soviet advisers, for a change, gave in to the Bulgarian workers. A Stakhnovite Soviet railroad engineer spent some hours with a Bulgarian counterpart. The entire Bulgarian press carried the tremendous respect the former expressed for the latter's group."
19. "A Soviet woman visitor joined silkworm breeders at Svilengrad, danced at their festivals, kissed their children, discussed their problems, all with a very dramatic and poised grace."
20. "Moscow invited Bulgarian botanist Methody Popov. Soviet scientist Lyzenko accepted with great pride the significance of the works of this Bulgarian scientist."
21. "In Sofia the cultural attachments between Moscow and Bulgaria were once again emphasized. Hristo Radevsky, Secretary General of the Union of Bulgarian writers, recently returned from a tour of the USSR, said: 'In Soviet literature our people, our intellectuals saw the reflection of that new spirit coming to the fore in the Soviet Union which our people so eagerly awaited.'
22. "In economic life, Soviet aid and the Stalinist version of the Marshall Plan got its autumnal spotlight."
23. "Ivan Popov, adviser of the Import Department of the Foreign Trade Ministry, said: 'The cornerstone of our entire activity is the all-round fraternal aid given us by the Soviet Union'. Through 1945-48 Bulgaria received from the Soviet Union 185 thousand tons of cereal. In 1949 and 1953 she received a total of 260 thousand tons of wheat. Then there is an agreement for delivery of 20 major plants, factories and complete installations. This aid is estimated at around US\$80 million."
24. "But whereas these figures told a story, they didn't bleed as human beings. With each aid, each plant, each trade deal, the Soviet advisers came in. Soon it became very clear to the Bulgarian intelligentsia that there was also a system of terroristic state capitalism and bureaucracy to cope with. The Five Year Plan was more or less a failure."
25. "These figures become apparent: as against the stipulated plan coal output increased by 13 per cent; wheat by 16 per cent; tobacco by 12 per cent; over-all industry by 40 per cent. Bursting a Sofian paper in a condensation of the peasants: 'This gross neglect to farm produce in spite of heavy agricultural machinery sent by the Soviet Union is an insult to the spirit of Bulgaria'."
26. "But Moscow had nipped the Bulgarian reaction in the bud. Promises and greetings poured forth in Sofia. Once again all was quiet. Sofia was closer to Moscow by autumn."
27. "Sofia's link with Moscow, deeply ideological in context, was emphasized. Moscow promised Bulgaria prosperity. Such a promise to these unfortunate people (a victim of foreign domination for close to six centuries) was deeply stirring and moving. The Bulgarians have liked this promise. The few industries, tractors, and rest homes impress them. (Not knowing, of course, that the world outside had made greater progress. A journalist was surprised that Turkey had 40 thousand tractors.) But this hope the Bulgarians relish; and this hope keeps Sofia where it is and Moscow the determining factor. A stage had been well set for the December 1953 elections. By October [1953] things seemed very well in Bulgaria. The Soviet advisers were once again feeling comfortable and Moscow didn't have to worry about the December election any longer."

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